1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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perienced. He told me of the effect of the tropical dawn on tropical forest peoples. Traveling in the dark, he noted, Indian canoemen tend to break the monotony by singing and talking, but just before the sun appears, they suddenly fall silent, as if in expectation of a sacred moment. Again and again, in camps and while traveling with Brazilian Indians, I was reminded of Quain's perception.

Although Robert Murphy rightly points out the decline of population and the trend toward disintegration of Trumaí culture even in 1938, the Trumaí were a functioning primitive society when Quain visited them. The upper Xingú River area was still very difficult to reach at that time. In 1938 access was by way of Cuyabá, the capital of Matto Grosso. Quain traveled from Cuyabá to the Indian post Simões Lopes by truck, then over savanna grasslands for six days on oxen, then down the Kuliseu River by canoe for seven days to a mission station maintained by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Young. After a delay here of almost three weeks, he spent another three weeks reaching the Trumaí, traveling slowly and visiting several tribal groups *en route*. The Kamayurá, at whose village he stayed shortly, provided him with canoemen for the last lap of his journey. It took Quain 38 days to return up river and cross the savanna country to Simões Lopes on leaving the Trumaí in late 1938.

Quain's letters to his mother and to his colleagues describe his trip to the Trumaí vividly. To quote a passage telling of his experiences on the upper Kuliseu River on his way to the mission station:

> The river journey was pleasant, until we began to have trouble. Even then I enjoyed it thoroughly. I had too much baggage for two canoes as I had planned. We had to use three. Besides myself I have two Brazilian men and a boy to help with the canoes. I had to paddle one myself and I enjoyed it thoroughly — despite the fact that white men aren't supposed to do that kind of thing. I gave the largest canoe with the most valuable cargo to the Brazilian whom I thought was the best canoeist. He had the boy to help with the paddling and poling through the rapids. Nevertheless it was his canoe which filled with water on the second day. We had to stop on a rock ledge and spread the things out to dry. Lots of rice and beans, papers and books, etc. It was evening. Not until the next morning did we realize that the sun barely touched the rocky ledge that we had chosen for drying the cargo. There was a wind — the worst of the dampness was removed before nightfall. Everything went well until we struck some swift rapids on the fifth day, when the same large canoe wrapped itself around a rock and the cargo went sailing down the river about eight miles an hour. I managed to rescue everything but a bag of farinha, a frying pan, a fishline and a couple of cakes of the hard unrefined sugar, which forms an important part of the diet throughout Matto Grosso.[3]

And about the Indians he wrote from the missionary station:

> My work for the next month is going to be a jumble of languages. It may take a month to reach the Trumaí because the Indians like to rest all the time. This means that I will have ample time to contact several in each of three different linguistic families (Carib, Arawak, Tupí). The Trumaí are entirely unrelated. This

[3] Quain letter, July 13, 1938.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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The fishing grounds and the still productive fruit trees of the old villages were considered to be the domain of the Trumaí, and these rights were apparently respected by others. When the village moved in search of new land, it was usually to one of the old sites, whose name the new village would take.

The Trumaí were once feared by the other tribes of the upper Xingú and were evidently a relatively numerous and vigorous people. However, when Quain visited them in 1938, they numbered only 43, and only ten years later, in 1948, the population had shrunken to a meagre 25.[11] Their small numbers had forced them to abandon village life once since Quain's visit, but they subsequently reunited in a new community.[11a]

Warfare

The topography of the flat upper Xingú Basin encourages considerable contact between tribes. The waterways are extensive and have importance beyond subsistence, as they are the chief avenues of trade and warfare. Communication through the river and flood plain system is the main reason for the high degree of cultural homogeneity that has been achieved by these tribes of diverse origins and languages. Intertribal relations are not confined to trade and warfare, but enter the spheres of social organization, ceremonialism and mythology.

Intertribal bonds within the upper Xingú Basin were based on peaceful relations between the tribes. These tribes formed part of a bounded social system in which groups outside the area did not take part. The Bakairí Indians of the Paranatinga River were on a friendly basis with the headwaters groups only because they had once lived on the Batoví River. Other tribes were uniformly enemies, regardless of cultural or linguistic affinities. Despite this peaceful interaction among the upper Xingú villages, there was considerable mutual fear and hostility between them which was expressed in witchcraft, petty thievery and intimidation. The practice of sorcery upon other villages is especially significant, in that sorcery is used in nearly all cultures only between people who share close interpersonal ties. This illustrates better than anything else the high degree of intervillage integration in the upper Xingú River Basin. The component groups constitute far more than a culture area — they form a society.

Despite the nominal peace within the upper Xingú area, the Trumaí lived in dread of their neighbors, and with good reason.[12] Situated

[11] Oberg 1953, p. 4.

[11a] Latest reports state that a measles epidemic has wrought great havoc, and that the few survivors have all joined other groups.

[12] Although fear of neighboring groups is general in the upper Xingú, de Lima (1949, p. 25) noted it to be especially strong among the numerically weak Trumaí.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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level of general anxiety. It was usually the result of several days of rumor, omens, and strange fires in the north.

Late one night during Quain's stay, after most of the village had retired, a near panic occurred when two women shouted that the Suyá were attacking. All the initiated men, even the weak and old, rushed to the village center with their bows and arrows. The women and children from two of the four Trumaí houses hurried with their hammocks to the other two houses. The frightened men milled around in the center of the village with no apparent organization or direction. The chief, who was trembling, did not take command of the situation.

If this had been a real attack, noted Quain, the raiders would have given a loud yell and loosed a volley of arrows. He later made an investigation and found no signs of intruders. One of the women thought that someone had thrown dirt at her. Quain believed this to be a habit of the Suyá, but one that was usually a friendly overture.

The women feared other tribes more than did the men, for one of the main purposes of raids was to capture women. In every upper Xingú community women from other tribes are always found. The dispersal of women takes three forms: capture in warfare (by groups outside the area), open abduction of a woman by intimidation of her fellow-villagers, and peaceful intertribal marriage. According to de Lima, the Suyá raid the Waurá village on the Batoví River for female captives, as the women of the Arawakan tribes are the only potters of the region.[16] The Trumaí lost many young women to the Kamayurá by intimidation, the second of the above means. Most of the women in the Trumaí village were at one time held by the Kamayurá with the result that, in many Trumaí marriages, the woman is several years older than the man. At the time of Quain's visit, Trumaí women were still living among the Kamayurá and other groups. One of them, the sister of the Trumaí chief, ran away from the Kamayurá and returned home because her husband had beaten her, an action that angered the Trumaí greatly. There she picked up the threads of her old life, but after a few weeks a party of Kamayurá took her back to their village. The Trumaí offered no resistance, either physical or verbal, although they outnumbered the visitors, for to have done so would have invited retaliation.

The fact that the Trumaí had lost many women completely, or regained them only after their most fertile years had passed, was probably a contributing factor to the depopulation of the group. The losses were only partially compensated for by the marriage of outside women into the Trumaí village. There were three foreign women in the community in 1938: a Suyá, a Mehinaku, and a Kamayurá. Their status was lower than that of the Trumaí women, and they were at times taunted because of their foreign origin. They did not participate as fully in the

[16] De Lima 1950, p. 5.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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CHAPTER TWO

TRUMAÍ SUBSISTENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Vital Statistics

The population of the Trumaí village in 1938 was 43. This figure includes the 3 foreign women in residence and excludes those few Trumaí who were living with other groups. There were 17 men, 16 women, and 10 pre-pubescent children, of whom 8 were male and only 2 were female. Due to the previously mentioned capture and forced marriage of Trumaí women, the average age of females seems to have been considerably greater than that of males. Two men were considered by the Trumaí as old, while four women were placed in that category. This disparity of age undoubtedly had an influence on the Trumaí birth rate.

Infant mortality seems to have been high, and Quain was of the opinion that it was further aggravated by abortion and infanticide. The fact that there were eight male children and but two girls suggests that infanticide must have been practiced only upon females. Quain's notes, however, give no indication that this was the fact. Pulmonary diseases have devastated all the groups of the upper Xingú, but the drop in the Trumaí population from 43 in 1938 to 25 in 1948 is probably not paralleled in the other villages during that time.

Village and Gardens

The Trumaí settlement was located a scant half-mile from a lagoon that opened directly upon the east shore of the Kuluene just a few miles away. The mouth of the lagoon was narrow, but it broadened out into a lake of moderate size with many small bays and was ringed with swamps. Proximity to the river made insects a continual nuisance during the rainy season. The Kamayurá village, located near the sandy beaches of a lagoon lined with *buriti* palms, was relatively free of insects.

The village consisted of four houses and another under construction. Between the houses and the surrounding forest lay an area of weeds and low underbrush into which refuse was thrown. The ground within the ring of houses was kept comparatively free of weeds and litter. The village "plaza" was about 200 feet wide. In the center were the log bench and fireplace of the men's gathering place. Nearby was a conical wicker cage in which the village harpy eagle was kept for its feathers, which were used in ceremonies.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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CHAPTER SIX

The Death of a Culture

Today there are but twenty-five remaining Trumaí. The fact that they disbanded once during the recent past shows that this small number approaches a critical point at which such a culture is no longer socially viable. If the present population trend continues, Trumaí society will definitely end, and, with the complete assimilation of the descendants of the Trumaí into other tribes, Trumaí culture, except for those elements of it that have been adopted by their neighbors, will belong to the past.

Primitive cultures and the populations that transmitted them are disappearing in many parts of the world today. In most instances, however, they are being destroyed by extended face-to-face contacts with Western society. This is not precisely the case with the Trumaí. Here, there was no large scale transmission of Western culture and no direct interaction with Brazilian society. But slight though the contact of the upper Xingú Indians with the whites was, it resulted in the introduction of respiratory infections that contributed greatly to their depopulation. In this sense, the white man is responsible for the impending death of the Trumaí.

Although the Trumaí were still carrying on their village life during Quain's residence and were to continue to do so, certain changes were taking place in their culture which were symptomatic of the fundamental instability induced by their low numbers.

It is immediately apparent that their weakness made the Trumaí vulnerable to other tribes, both the nominally friendly ones of the upper Xingú Basin, and the hostile ones of the surrounding country. In 1938 the Trumaí could not have successfully withstood a strong Suyá or Yuruna raid, nor could they have launched an attack upon the Suyá for women, as did the more vigorous Kamayurá. Indeed, the Trumaí had good reason to fear the least sound in the jungle at night.

Also, the Trumaí were held in low esteem by their immediate neighbors at the time of Quain's study. This was a severe blow to their *elan*, and it undoubtedly affected their self-image. It led, too, to more concrete results. As noted above, other tribes took Trumaí women during their most fertile years, and it is almost certain that the few "outside" women, who were brought into the Trumaí village through marriage, failed to restore the balance. Moreover, there were no "outside" men

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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105 182 648 in the Trumaí community, for, as Oberg notes, no adult male would choose to live with a people of such low status.[1]

105 162 It might be expected that the Trumaí could have compensated for this drain by raising their birth rate. However, in this population of 43 persons, there were only ten children, an extremely small number when the low average life span is considered. Furthermore, only two of the children were females. Of the approximately twelve women who 105 163 were capable of bearing children, only one was pregnant, and the others 161 were urging her to abort her child. Thus, infanticide and abortion were taking a heavy toll in the Trumaí village.

847 845 [171] The custom of killing twins and of spacing births three or four years apart are reported by Oberg for the Kamayurá,[2] and these factors may well have been present in the Trumaí situation. The long post-natal taboo on sexual intercourse had the same effect. Wagley, who studied the dying but equally unacculturated Tapirapé, found that traditional practices were contributing to the complete depopulation of that group also.[3]

105 161 178 154 But among the Trumaí there is still another and less tangible dimension. Abortion may have been urged on a pregnant woman because she had no husband, but how is one to explain the killing of two of Aloari's children without his consent, or the fact that there were eight male and only two female children in the community? The limited information available suggests that the Trumaí were purposely restricting their number and committing suicide, perhaps unintentionally, in the process. Two reasons for this extreme behavior may be hypothesized: first, the impasse in which the Trumaí found themselves because of the steady depopulation made them so personally insecure and apathetic regarding both the present and the future that they were no longer willing to rear sizable families, despite their evident devotion to children; and second, they may not have thought it possible to produce the surplus necessary to support such families. Actually, however, even with their diminished numbers the Trumaí could have increased their food supply.

105 511 433 226 Their lowered standard of living was due to more than attitudes. Loss of population no doubt also decreased the yield of Trumaí fishing and therefore limited their chief source of protein. To be sure, bow and arrow fishing was little affected, but fish poisoning, the only communal subsistence technique practiced by them, was much less effective when employed by a small group, for a few people can adequately poison only smaller watercourses and branches of lagoons, while a greater number can cover larger streams and whole lagoons. In the latter circumstance, both the take would be larger and larger species would be available. Moreover, when the waters are heavily poisoned and enough people are present to reap the "harvest," there is less chance of fish escaping. Thus, up to

[1] Oberg 1953, p. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [3] Wagley 1940.